



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS
The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
The Bureau of Emergency Management
Division of Emergency Services
N.H. Department of Safety, Richard M. Flynn, Commissioner
33 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03305
1-800-852-3792
newsletters@nhoem.state.nh.us

October 2005

PRESIDENT SIGNS DISASTER DECLARATION FOR FLOODING – President Bush has signed a major disaster declaration for flooding that occurred this month in New Hampshire. The declaration will provide aid for individuals and businesses in Cheshire, Grafton, Hillsborough, Merrimack and Sullivan counties and aid for public infrastructure in Belknap, Cheshire, Hillsborough, Merrimack and Sullivan counties.

This has been a year of record hurricane devastation, but in New Hampshire it was a series of unnamed downpours that triggered the flooding. The floods killed seven people, caused the evacuation of approximately 1,500 people and caused millions of dollars in damage to homes and roads. The disaster prompted a massive response by local first responders and state and private sector agencies. The rain started on the evening of Friday, October 7, and didn't let up until the morning hours of Sunday, October 9. The state EOC was fully activated by 4 a.m. Sunday and remained open around the clock for more than a week as additional rain threatened more flooding.

Governor Lynch declared a State of Emergency on Sunday morning and took an active role in overseeing the emergency response. Agencies supporting the emergency response in the EOC were the National Guard, State Police, the American Red Cross and the departments of Transportation, Environmental Services, Resources and Economic Development, Fish and Game, Health and Human Services. Emergency Management personnel provided core staffing for the EOC and Emergency Communications and HHS personnel staffed a Flood Information Hotline that was in operation 24 hours a day.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS HELP DURING FLOODING - The N.H. Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) was among the groups responding to flood victims. DBHRT members reported to the Alstead Service Center. Team members conducted community outreach and provided supportive counseling to victims of the flood. They also provided psychological first aid to victims, first responders, family members of the missing and deceased as well as assessment and referrals to local community mental health centers for long term counseling. In addition, the Alstead team coordinated various critical incident stress debriefing teams to work closely with first responders and school personnel.

In Keene, DBHRT provided approximately 48 team members to conduct outreach as part of three-person teams (mental health, public health nurse and family service worker). These teams went door to door in the affected areas assessing needs, making referrals and listening to peoples' stories. This outreach effort was delivered over a period of four days and was done in cooperation with the American Red Cross and DHHS.

KATRINA PROMPTS QUESTIONS ABOUT EMERGENCY PLANS – Problems with the response to Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast are prompting questions about emergency plans all around the country. Emergency managers, political leaders and members of the public are asking “could it happen here?” In New Hampshire, the short answer is no: most of the destruction caused by Katrina resulted from the failure of the levees that protected the City of New Orleans. New Hampshire has no large urban populations living 20 feet below sea level. But that doesn't mean the state is immune to other sorts of major catastrophes, as the October floods showed. Emergency managers here can learn from mistakes made elsewhere.

The biggest problems with Katrina resulted from transportation, evacuation and sheltering. Most of the people in New Orleans had no access to private transportation and public transit broke down early on. When people did get out of storm damaged areas there was nowhere to house them. New Hampshire isn't likely to face evacuations on that scale. Only 79 people stayed in the Red Cross shelter in Keene on the first night of the flood even though about 1,000 had been evacuated in the area. Most people made their own arrangements. But a larger demand for shelters would place a severe strain on the state's response capabilities.

RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN UPDATES – Annual award letters advising on amounts of financial support for emergency planning have been sent to all communities in the Seabrook Station and Vermont Yankee Emergency Planning Zones. Also receiving financial assistance are the Rockingham and Cheshire County Sheriff's Offices, Laidlaw Transportation and the host communities of Manchester, Rochester, Dover and Keene. The money is provided by the two nuclear plants to help cover the costs of emergency planning within the EPZs. Also from the RERP, Revision 13 of the Seabrook Station and Vermont Yankee emergency plans and the associated Traffic Management plans have been provided to local emergency managers on CD-ROM. About 300 copies were distributed.

SEABROOK EXERCISE SEQUENCE SCHEDULED – The 2006 Seabrook Station drill will be a 50-mile ingestion pathway exercise. Combined Functional Drill #1 will be January 24 & 25. CFD #2 will be March 15 & 16. The Graded Exercise will be April 11 & 12. Reception Center Training will be held October 17, 21, 24 & 28, 2005. Reception Center Drills will be held on November 14, 2005 and March 13, 2006. The Reception Center Graded Exercise will be held on April 10, 2006. Graded exercises for Seabrook Station and Vermont Yankee are held every two years with the plants alternating exercise years.

NEW CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL ORGANIZED – Citizen Corps Coordinator Mike Pacheco announced that the City of Lebanon has registered the Lebanon/Hanover Citizen Corps Council. That brings to 25 the number of councils and affiliated organizations in the state. Citizen Corps Councils are the sponsoring bodies of volunteer programs such as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) and Medical Reserve Corps. These programs are an effective way to channel volunteers to assist with emergency management and other community service projects. For more information go to www.nhcitizencorps.org.

THORNTON/WATERVILLE VALLEY CERT ACTIVATED – On Wednesday evening, October 19, the Town of Waterville Valley activated the Thornton-Waterville Valley CERT to assist the Police Department with a door-to-door, emergency notification of e-coli contamination in the town's water supply. CERT members were paired with local police officers and visited each household handing out "Boil Water Order" notices, and explaining the situation to town residents. The CERT was activated at approximately 1600 hours, with five members being readily available for immediate assistance. The CERT was released at approximately 2010 hours upon completion of the mission.

VOAD COORDINATES VOLUNTEER DISASTER RESPONSE – New Hampshire VOAD is alive and well. It looks different from Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster in other states, but it fits our New Hampshire way of life. VOAD is made up of organizations that are activated during disasters through VolunteerNH!, the state's volunteer coordinating entity. When communities need help with an emergency, Citizen Corps in those communities can collaborate to help their neighbors. If they need help from outside the community Citizen Corps can call VolunteerNH!, which will activate many local, state, regional and national volunteer organizations that can offer further assistance. Those organizations include the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, Church World Service, Southern Baptist Men, The Carpenters, Christian World Reform and many others. Volunteers are an important component in disaster response efforts. To learn more about VOAD in New Hampshire, e-mail amagoon@nhoem.state.nh.us.

Editor's note: This is the second edition of the Bureau of Emergency Management's electronic newsletter. So far the response has been very good. At the suggestion of a number of people we are distributing it in .pdf format to cut down on the size of the file in your e-mail box. Send comments to newsletter@nhoem.state.nh.us. Also, the new BEM website is up and running. Check it out at www.nhoem.state.nh.us.